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ROMNEY OCEAN TASK FORCE RELEASES FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Underscores need for new state policies and federal action

The Massachusetts Ocean Management Task Force today released its final report, elaborating 16 policy recommendations to enhance the governance, management and scientific understanding of Massachusetts' ocean waters.

Among its central recommendations, the Task Force encourages the eventual passage of state legislation that would provide legal authority to the Commonwealth, in consultation with municipalities, to designate certain areas within state waters for specific purposes such as industrial use or natural resource conservation. The report also encourages greater cooperation between state and federal agencies, recognizing that many ocean issues are shared across state and federal ocean boundaries.

"This panel's work has positioned the Bay State as a national leader in effective ocean governance and management," said Environmental Affairs Secretary Ellen Herzfelder. "In just a few short months you have redefined how we will plan and prepare for the 21st Century challenges now facing our oceans. We now have some real tools with which we can tame the new 'Wild West' of ocean development."

The Ocean Management Task Force is a central part of the Massachusetts Ocean Management Initiative, created by Governor Mitt Romney in March 2003 to ensure state ocean management policies adequately address the recent explosion of proposed new ocean uses such as wind power, wave power, and large-scale aquaculture.

Appointed by Secretary Herzfelder in June 2003, the Task Force is chaired by former Environmental Secretary Dr. Susan F. Tierney and comprises 23 members representing a diverse group of ocean users: commercial and recreational fishermen, managers, scientists, and nonprofit organizations.

"Massachusetts owns the 3-mile offshore 'real estate' of the state waters," Dr. Tierney commented. "The Task Force unanimously thinks that the importance of these waters to our

economy and quality of life here in Massachusetts warrants giving the state the tools it needs to better plan for the uses and protection of these resources. We hope that our consensus on our sixteen recommendations and thoughtful principles provide a useful framework for the Romney administration to consider in developing its own plan of action on ocean issues.”

Christophe Tolou, President of the Center for SeaChange that works to implement the recommendations of the Pew Oceans Commission, added, “The oceans and marine life don’t recognize arbitrary jurisdictional boundaries. Cooperation at the state level will be critical to a meaningful national ocean policy. The work of the Task Force and this report provides a solid foundation for such an effort in Massachusetts.”

Today’s release of Task Force recommendations signals the beginning of the second phase of Governor Mitt Romney’s Ocean Management Initiative. With the work of the Task Force completed, Secretary Herzfelder will gather public input and examine next steps. The report and recommendations will be noticed in the *Environmental Monitor* on March 24, 2004 and the Office of Coastal Zone Management will accept public comments through April 23, 2004. The report, recommendations, and technical report are available online at <http://www.state.ma.us/czm/MOMI/finalrpts.htm>.

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Summary of Recommendations

Theme	Recommendation	<u>Description</u>
Governance	Comprehensive Ocean Resources Management Act (CORMA)	The Secretary of Environmental Affairs should introduce legislation for a new, comprehensive Ocean Resource Management Act
Governance	Ocean Management Coordination	The Commonwealth should actively promote federal/regional/state cooperative ecosystem management
Governance	Climate Change Plans	The Commonwealth's Climate Action Plan should include actions relating to effects of climate change on our coasts and oceans
Governance	Ocean Sanctuaries Act Revisions	The regulations implementing the Ocean Sanctuaries Act (OSA) (302 CMR 5.00) should be updated
Management Tools	Fee Structures and Levels	Current Chapter 91 license fees charged for work in flowed tidelands should be examined and adjusted (i.e., increased or decreased) where appropriate
Management Tools	Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	The Secretary of Environmental Affairs should convene a working group to develop recommendations regarding the designation of MPAs
Management Tools	Coordination of Mitigation	Interagency coordination of project mitigation should be improved
Management Tools	Enforcement	Enforcement of existing environmental laws should be a high priority
Management Tools	Visual, Cultural, and Aesthetic Impacts	Methodologies and standards for the analysis of visual, cultural, and aesthetic impacts of proposed projects in state waters should be developed
Management Tools	Marine and Ocean Resource Trends Advisory Group	An advisory group of marine and fishery scientists should be appointed to advise the state
Management Tools	Use Characterization	Inventories of the uses and resources of the state's marine waters should be developed.
Scientific Understanding	Ocean Monitoring and Research	A comprehensive ocean resources monitoring and research plan should be developed
Scientific Understanding	Seafloor Mapping	The Commonwealth should acquire seafloor maps
Scientific Understanding	Standardized Protocols for Data Collection	Standards should be developed for monitoring data submitted by project proponents

Outreach	Ocean Literacy and Stewardship	The Secretary should commit to developing a new ocean literacy and stewardship ethic among all citizens of Massachusetts
Outreach	Dissemination of Ocean Resource Data	Public dissemination of certain data collected on the Commonwealth's resources, should be increased

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